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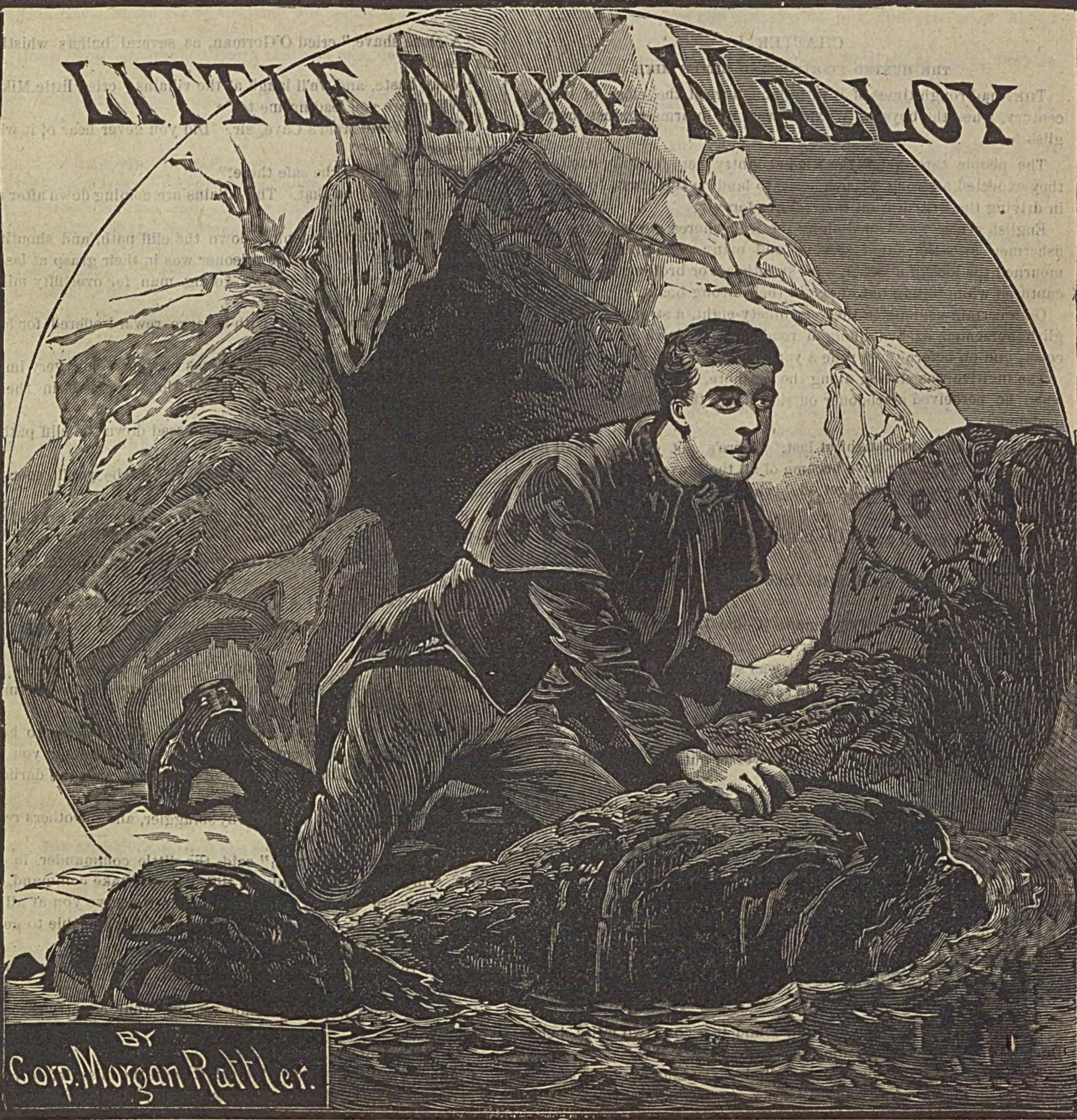
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Vol. I

LITTLE MIKE MALLOY



BY
Corp. Morgan Rattler.

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LITTLE MIKE MALLOY,

THE PRIDE OF THE IRISH COAST.

BY CORPORAL MORGAN RATTLER,

Author of "Garry Galore; or, The Adventures of a Wild Irish Boy at Home and Abroad," Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE HUNTED FUGITIVE AND LITTLE MIKE.

THEY had rough times of it in Ireland toward the close of the last century, when the boys of Wexford were up in arms against their English foes.

The people throughout the whole country were fearfully excited, as they expected a strong French force to land on the coast, to aid them in driving the British from their shores forever.

English cruisers swarmed along the Irish shores, pressing the hardy fishermen into the hated service, and many an humble Celtic home mourned the loss of a father, son, sweetheart or brother, who had been captured while toiling out at sea in their strong boats.

On a certain evening in the year ninety-eight, a strong party of English horsemen dashed along a road leading down to the southern coast, and on before them rode a young man on a weary horse.

The fugitive was staring along the seashore, as if in quest of a boat, when he perceived a schooner outside flying the English flag, and he exclaimed:

"Hang it all, I am caught at last. There's not even a small boat to be seen. What can have become of all the brave fishermen?"

"Halt with you, sir, and get off," cried a sharp voice from a bluff at the side of the road.

The fugitive pulled up on the instant, and ran up the steep path, as he cried:

"I'll wager my life that's little Mike Malloy of the smuggler Pride of Erin."

"Right you are, Mr. O'Gorman. Come this way, and you may laugh at them all."

Another moment and the fugitive was screened behind the bluff and shaking the hand of a sturdy little sailor of eighteen, as he asked:

"How is every inch of you, my brave friend? What has become of all the lads?"

Little Mike pointed to the English vessel outside, as he bitterly replied:

"What's left of them are hiding from that English hawk. Make haste and follow me, or the blood-hounds of the land will be on you."

And the little smuggler darted down the steep cliff path at a break-neck speed, while the fugitive followed after, as he asked:

"Is your father all safe?"

"Yes, safe on board that pirate thief out there—may the old boy sink him."

"When was he captured?"

"Last night in the storm."

"And the lugger was taken?"

"Not at all, sir. She is safe and sound in a cove two miles below. Duck down, as the villains above are going to fire now."

The soldiers had dismounted and climbed the bluff, and just as little Mike spoke several of them were taking aim down at the fugitives.

"A close shave," cried O'Gorman, as several bullets whistled over his head.

"Make haste, and we'll laugh at the villains," cried little Mike.

"Where are you leading me to?"

"To the White Maid's Cave, sir. Did you never hear of it when you were here before?"

"Never. Will we be safe there?"

"You may rely on that. The villains are coming down after us now. Hurry on."

The soldiers were hastening down the cliff path, and shouting with triumph, as they felt that the prisoner was in their grasp at last.

They had pursued that daring young man for over fifty miles, and he had slain four of their comrades.

He was an outlawed rebel, with a large reward offered for his capture, dead or alive.

Besides, it was believed that he was bearing some very important papers to France from the Irish revolutionary chiefs in the city of Dublin.

With triumphant cries the soldiers pressed down the cliff path, while little Mike yelled back:

"To the mischief with you, you sharks. Maybe you'll soon change your tune."

Then little Mike and his patriot friend disappeared around a large rock.

When the soldiers reached that rock, they did change their triumphant cries, indeed.

The fugitive pair had disappeared as suddenly as if they had been traveling in a treacherous bog; and their place of concealment could not be discovered.

Five minutes after, and Captain O'Gorman was standing in a large cave before a band of thirty smugglers, who were all well armed with pistols, carbines and cutlasses.

"My brave friends," said the stranger, "I am sorry to hear that your brave captain had been taken. Who is to command you now?"

"Who but little Mike, the pride of our coast and the darling of us all?"

The answer was given by a brawny smuggler, and the others responded with a will.

"Yes, Captain O'Gorman," said the little commander, in modest tones, "my brave father ordered that I should take command, and all the men left are willing. In what way can we serve you at all?"

"Land me on the French coast as soon as it is possible to get there, and I will see that you all get rewarded well."

"As to the reward, we leave that to you; but there is something else to be done first."

"What is more important than serving your country through me, young man?"

"The rescue of my brave father."

"The rescue of your brave father! How in the mischief do you mean to accomplish that if he is a prisoner on board the English vessel?"

"By attacking the English vessel in the dead of the night and fighting those on board."

"You are mad, Mike! There are certainly over a hundred fighting men on her."

"If she had two hundred we'll have a whack at her to-night. What do you say to that proposition, my own bold lads?"

"We are with you to the death!"

"We'll follow our brave little captain if he made at a big English frigate!"

"Or the whole navy!"

Such were some of the cries that greeted the little captain's daring proposition, and there was not a single objection raised by the faithful smugglers.

Captain O'Gorman held down his head for some moments, as if in deep thought, and he then spoke to little Captain Mike Malloy again, saying:

"I glory in your love and courage, but I am in a fearful scrape. You know that I do not fear for myself, but I have important papers about me that must be taken to France at once."

"I'll take you over to France."

The speaker was a young fisher girl who had just entered the cave.

She was as dark and as brilliant as a fiery Spanish woman, and she spoke in very determined tones as she stood before the fugitive.

Captain O'Gorman seized her by the hand and shook it warmly, as he cried:

"Why, Maura, how are you? I heard that you had deserted your friends here."

"I never desert my friends, captain. I have been up in Wexford with the patriots. I will steer you over to France in my father's yawl, if you——"

"That is sheer nonsense, Maura."

Little Mike Malloy was very angry when he uttered the interruption.

The brave little fellow was dead in love with Maura Shane, and he was fearfully jealous of the handsome young Irish patriot, Captain O'Gorman.

Did the fisher girl care for O'Gorman?

That remains to be seen.

Maura turned her flashing black eyes on little Mike, as she asked, impetuously:

"What is sheer nonsense? Have I not the right, and am I not able, to steer the captain over to France? Remember, you're not my master."

"I'll tell you what we'll do, captain," said little Mike, who did not care to raise a quarrel with the girl he loved; "the moment father is released, we'll take you over to France in the lugger."

"But most of you will get killed or taken in the mad attempt on the schooner."

"No fear of that, the way we'll manage it. Will you take a hand with us?"

"To be sure I will."

"And so will I," said Maura. "The soldiers are watching outside yet."

"How many, Maura?" asked Mike.

"Over fifty, at least."

The little fellow turned to Captain O'Gorman, and said, in a whisper:

"If we could only capture the soldiers, it would help us to take the schooner."

"In what way?"

"I'd dress the boys up in their clothes, and pretend they were English soldiers."

"You're a born genius, Mike. Let us think what we can do in the matter."

Maura was listening to them, and she soon said, in eager tones:

"Let me help you. Give me a chance, and I'll soon have the soldiers at your mercy."

"How is it to be done, Maura?"

"With goat's milk and whisky."

"But sure, it would take a big barrel of it to set all the Englishmen drunk."

"A large pailful or so will do, if you put some of that drug stuff in it you brought over."

"By the Lord Harry, but it is a fine scheme," said little Mike; "but you mustn't go up among the villains of soldiers for all the world, Maura."

"Why not?"

"Because they'd soon make violent love to you, the infernal villains."

"Then let them, if they will only drink the milk and whisky. I'll set out."

"Hang me if you'll go without me," said little Mike, in decided tones.

"But you'll be known, and they'll swing you up without any mercy."

"Not if I go up rigged out as your old mother, my sweet, purty darling."

And little Mike gave the pretty girl a very loving squeeze on the sly.

"Stop your silly nonsense before people," she cried, "and let us set about dosing the English soldiers before it is too dark."

"Can't I go as your grandmother?" asked Captain O'Gorman, with a roguish smile.

"Not at all. You haven't the right brogue to pass off as one of us. Besides, three is altogether too many company this time."

And the young girl drew little Mike into an inner cave, as she whispered:

"He's a very brave man, but he is too much of a dandy for our tastes."

"I hope you will always keep thinking so, my dear darling, and——"

"Shut up with your nonsense, or I'll let him take me over to France for good."

"If he did, I'd follow him and murder him, and you know it full well, Maura."

"There's no danger of his asking me. Now let us set to work in earnest."

Very soon after Maura and her pretended mother were climbing up the cliff with two pailfuls of the deceitful beverage.

The soldiers were either drawn up along the bluff or searching for the fugitive among the rocks.

Maura was soon hailed by a young officer, who strode to her, crying:

"What have you in the pail, pretty one?"

"Milk and whisky, sir, at only three pence a cup. Will you try some of it?"

"On my honor, but I'll give you a shilling for a kiss or so in the bargain."

The officer made a spring as if to seize the young girl around the waist, when little Mike gave him a box on the ear, crying:

"Hands off, bad cess to you. Is this our thanks for bringing you fine milk and whisky?"

"I'll have you drubbed to death, you old hag!" cried the young officer, as he beckoned to some of his men to seize the pair.

Dropping their pails, Maura and Mike darted down the path again at full speed.

"After them and seize them!" cried the officer, leading his men in the chase. "That pretty peasant girl must not escape us."

"Bad luck to these petticoats!" cried the little captain, as he stumbled and fell. "Now I'll have to strike a blow or two for liberty."

The young officer was soon on Mike, crying:

"Call on your daughter to stop, or I'll have you flung over the cliff."

"The mischief you will, you murdering villain? Take that, and that."

And Mike gave the young dandy two cracks that sent him sprawling on the path.

"Give him a kick for me, mother!" yelled the lively girl, with a loud, merry laugh.

"A dozen, if I had time."

But Mike did not have time, as two of the soldiers were soon close on him.

The little fellow was in the act of kicking the fallen officer, when he let fly with his fist at the foremost soldier, and sent him over.

"Hurra!" cried Mike, kicking and striking again, "here's an old Irishwoman that can wallup a whole regiment of you dirty soldiers one at the time."

"Beat her brains out, the cursed old hag!" cried the fallen officer. "Stab her!"

"Go to blazes!" yelled little Mike, dashing down the path again. "You've got the fine milk and good whisky, and that it may poison you all."

In less than five minutes after the laughing pair were safe again in the cave.

"What success?" asked O'Gorman.

"That remains to be seen," said Mike. "We had to cut for it, but we left the fine medicine behind us for the redcoated blackguards."

Then Maura gave a very droll account of Mike's fight with the officer and soldiers, and concluded by saying, in merry tones:

"I'll steal up after it is dark to see how the medicine is affecting the rogues."

"'Pon my soul, you won't," said Mike. "That task must be mine, and no palaver."

"It is my turn now," said O'Gorman, in very decided tones. "I had some experience in America as a scout and a spy, and I will go up."

"Remember your mission," said Maura.

"I will leave my papers here with you, and you will promise to see that they reach France if I fall. Besides, I have another object in paying a visit above."

"If you must you must," said Mike; "but I insist on going up there with you."

"Very well, Captain Mike. You are in command here, but you know I am not in your service."

"Will you attack the schooner with us?"

"No fear of that, if I live. I never shirked a good fight in my life."

"I believe that, Captain O'Gorman. My head and life on it, but we'll take the English vessel this very night and rescue my brave father."

"You will, you will," cried Maura. "Brave men never fail when they are in deadly earnest. May Heaven prosper you in the venture, I say."

In about half an hour after Mike and O'Gorman left the cave on their perilous mission.

And Maura was soon on their track.

CHAPTER II.

AT SOLDIERS AND AT SAILORS.

"MAY the fiends take that Irish whisky!"

"It may be the goat's milk, captain."

"Whatever it is, it is an infernal shame and an outrage. Fifty men as drunk as beasts, in this desolate spot, and not even able to tend to their horses. What if the rebels should pounce on us?"

Thus spoke Captain Gray, who was in command of the party of dragoons, and his words were addressed to an old sergeant, who was the only sober man in the troop that evening.

They were marching to and fro on the bluff, casting their eyes out at the schooner, and then down at the helpless and slumbering soldiers on the side of the road below the bluff.

The old sergeant soon espied two persons crawling up the steep path, and he presented his carbine at the strangers, as he cried:

"Who comes there?"

"A friend or so, to be sure," was the reply given in the rich Irish brogue.

"March up here, then, you rascals, and give an account of yourselves," cried the angry captain, holding his sword and pistol ready for action, and taking his stand beside the sober old sergeant.

"Faith, captain, agra, we're only two poor fishermen," said the former speaker, "and we are agoing away in search of work, since we lost our boats."

The two men were soon standing before the armed and wary soldiers.

They had all the appearance of being weather-beaten old fishermen in hard luck, and the voice of the speaker was downhearted enough, indeed.

Captain Gray looked at the sergeant in a keen manner, as he asked:

"What do you think of becoming soldiers?"

"We're too old entirely, sir. Sure, we're only able to pull a boat or haul a net."

"Would you like to earn a crown now?"

"Faith, that we would, as we haven't a rap to get us a taste or a drop."

"Could you not borrow a boat and take a note out to that schooner?"

The little old fisherman rubbed his head and replied:

"We might borrow a boat, but we're in dread to go near the schooner at all."

"Why is that?"

"They are pressing many poor devils like us into the service, you know, sir."

"I'll warrant that you will not be pressed this time. Take a note I'll write out to the schooner and I'll give you a crown apiece. What say you now?"

"Sure, I'm willing, if my mate here is," answered the little fellow, eying his taller friend.

"To be sure I am," said the other.

Captain Gray pulled out a note-book and commenced to write with a pencil.

When the note was finished he asked:

"Can either of you write?"

"Faith, we can't, sir. There's not much of the larning among us poor devils."

"Take that note out to the schooner, and when you come back to me you will get two crowns apiece. Can I trust you both faithfully in this matter?"

"Faith, you may, sir."

"Moreover, if you give me a little information I will make them pounds."

"What do you want to know, sir?"

"Do you know anything of a young stranger in hiding about here this evening?"

"What's his name and what is he like?"

"He is known as Captain O'Gorman, and he is a gentlemanly-looking young fellow."

"Oh, begor, but 'tis we could soon put your hand on him, the slippery rogue."

"Do so, and I will give you five pounds apiece, fellow. Where is he?"

The little old fellow whispered to his companion in the Irish tongue, and then said:

"'Twouldn't be safe for you or for us to go after the captain unless you had a big force at your back, for he has a lot of them rogues of smugglers about him, and they are very born devils at fighting."

"Where is he?"

"In a cave down below here, sir. Call your men, and we'll show you where it is."

Captain Gray whispered to the old sergeant, who nodded his head in approval.

"The truth is, old fellows," the captain said, "that all my other men are now sound asleep with fatigue. 'Tis to get some good help from the vessel outside that I am now sending you out to the schooner with the note."

"That alters the case entirely," cried the little fisherman, as he knocked the pistol out of the captain's hand by a sudden blow of a stout cudgel. "At the other, brave captain!"

Captain O'Gorman did not wait for the order, as he had closed with the old sergeant on the instant, and had seized his gun.

The English soldier was a strong, active man for his age, and a desperate struggle ensued.

In the meanwhile, little Mike was battling away with the captain, using his stout stick against the officer's sword, and with splendid effect.

Captain Gray swore loud and strong as he cut and slashed away at the little fellow, while he kept to his sleeping men, in the hope of awaking some of them from their sound slumbers.

Little Mike parried the cuts and slashes with apparent ease, and returned the captain's efforts by giving him several hard cracks on the head, while he kept bantering him in the following manner:

"Why, captain agra, where did you learn to fight at all? Sure, I'd like to give a few lessons, so I would. Keep your temper, man alive, or you'll soon lose your sword. Give it to the soldier, brave captain."

At that moment Maura sprang up the path and watched the combatants, crying:

"Glory to you, Mike. Bravo for you, my brave captain. Down with the English dogs."

"Sound the call for the boys, Maura, as we have floored them," cried Mike, as he struck the captain a rattling crack on the head.

"Be all that's holy, Mister Soldier, but I've won your sword in fair fight."

Captain Gray was down, and so was his sergeant, while their victors held their weapons.

Maura drew out a small whistle and blew a shrill blast with it.

"Are you going to murder us?" cried Captain Gray.

"Not at all," said little Mike, "although you won't thank us much for our kindness."

Captain O'Gorman had one foot on the sergeant's breast, and the gun uplifted, as he cried:

"Do you surrender, Englishman?"

"Who are you?"

"I'm Captain O'Gorman, the very man you were after all day, my friend."

The old sergeant muttered a curse or two, and then cried out, in fierce tones:

"Blast my eyes, but I'd have fought you better if I had only known that."

"Surrender, sergeant!" cried Captain Gray, "as here comes a lot of the Irish cutthroats!"

The smugglers rushed up with a will, and the two prisoners were soon secured.

"Let me read that note, Mike," said O'Gorman, giving Captain Gray a stern glance.

The young Irish soldier then held the note to a lantern carried by one of the smugglers, and his face grew darker at every line he read.

"This is infamous," he cried, "and unworthy of a soldier, Captain Gray. Listen, friends."

And Captain O'Gorman read aloud as follows:

"To the Captain of the English Schooner:

"DEAR SIR,—I am here in command of fifty dragoons, and we have been in pursuit of a famous Irish rebel, who is hiding in the rocks in front of you. All my men, save one, have been disabled by drinking mad Irish whisky, and some of their accursed goat's milk. Please send me as many of your men as you can spare on shore to capture the rebel. These two old rascals will lead you back here again, and then you can press them into your service, or hang them, as you may please—the rogues! Send fifty men, well-armed, if possible, as the rebel is in a cave here, I hear, with a party of armed smugglers. We'll hang them all together.

"Royally yours,

"CAPTAIN GRAY,

"of the —th Dragoons."

Captain O'Gorman folded the note, placed it in his breast-pocket, and then addressed the fierce smugglers in harsh, loud tones, saying:

"What does the scoundrel deserve who would write such a note as that, I ask you?"

"Hanging is too good for him!"

"Death to the false English dog!"

"He should be sent adrift on the broad ocean, without either food or water!"

"Fling him over the high cliff!"

Several of the smugglers rushed at the English captain with uplifted cutlasses, as one of them yelled, in thrilling tones:

"Cut the hound to pieces!"

"Hold there, men!" yelled little Mike, in a voice that rang out above the din.

The men obeyed the order as promptly as if they belonged to a regular war-ship.

Then little Mike continued:

"On your lives, don't touch the soldier. He is my prisoner, and I will deal with him."

"That's right, my brave friend," cried Captain O'Gorman. "Although he would consign us to the gallows, we will teach him a lesson in manners as well as in fence."

Little Mike peered over the bluff at the sleeping soldiers, and then cried:

"Two of you take the prisoners blindfolded to the cave, while the rest of you go down and strip the drunken soldiers of their outer clothing."

The active smugglers went at the work of stripping the soldiers as if they had all served an apprenticeship as night marauders on the field of battle.

While that work was going on, little Mike, Maura and Captain O'Gorman were consulting together.

"Maura's plan is best," said Mike, at length.

"So I say," coincided O'Gorman. "Maura, you should have been a man, and then you would be a great soldier."

"Nonsense. I am very well as it is, captain; you must let me share in the danger."

"I won't stand that," said Mike.

"Nor I," added O'Gorman. "What would become of us if you were killed, dear girl?"

"Then good-bye to you forever."

The impulsive girl turned to descend the path, when little Mike sprung and caught her, crying:

"In mercy, don't leave us, Maura, and you can do and say whatever you like here."

"Don't go, good Maura," said O'Gorman, "or our luck will be sure to go with you."

"Very well, then. No more of your mastering with me, either of you. Now, let us see to the boat. My father's yawl is safe in the cove below. Hasten!"

In less than an hour after, Mike and another smuggler, disguised as old fishermen, were pulling the yawl out toward the English schooner, and Maura was in the stern steering the little craft.

Messengers were flying from the cave in all directions to summon the fishermen along the coast.

The schooner was then lying at anchor in a small bay about two miles from the bluff.

As the boat neared the English vessel, it was hailed by a sentry, who cried:

"Boat ahoy! What are you fellows at?"

"'Tis a message we have from the captain of the soldiers," cried little Mike. "And 'tis to be given into the hands of your captain at once, man."

"Keep off for a while, then."

The smugglers rested on their oars until the order was given to approach the schooner.

Then little Mike ascended to the deck, and made his awkward bow to Captain Parrott, who had been summoned up from a jolly carouse in the cabin.

The commander of the English schooner was a dissipated-looking man of thirty, who was reputed to be the son of an inglorious king of England.

"What is it about a message to me from the captain of the soldiers?" he demanded, as he snatched the note from Mike's hand. "Give him some rum."

"Thank you kindly, captain agra," said Mike, casting a sly glance around the deck.

Then he said to himself:

"I wonder where poor father is? No matter, for we'll soon have him dancing with joy again."

Captain Parrott read the note by the light of a lantern, and then burst out:

"Ha, ha, ha! This is an excellent joke. One of his majesty's officers at the mercy of the smugglers, and his men all blind drunk on Irish whisky."

Captain Parrott then turned to little Mike, and asked, in more serious tones:

"Where did you leave Captain Gray?"

"Watching over his men on the bluff beyond there, sir, and he's powerfully put out."

"Do you know where the rebel is hiding?"

"I do, sir."

"How many smugglers are with him, think you?"

"About twenty or so, sir."

"And you will guide my men to the cave?"

"With a heart and a half, captain; and 'tis I'd be only too glad to pull the rope that's to hang Captain O'Gorman, the deceiving, roguish young schemer."

"Captain O'Gorman, did you say?" cried Captain Parrott, in very excited tones.

"That's the young rogue's name, sir. Oh, 'tis I that have the good warrant to remember him."

"Indeed? What sort of a man is your O'Gorman?"

"He's no O'Gorman of mine—the villain. The rogue I mean is a well-looking man enough, about as tall as yourself, but not half as handsome at all."

"None of your blarney, Paddy. Has he a scar on the right cheek, and—"

"Bedad, 'tis the same one, sir. He told my poor girl 'twas the cut of a sword he got fighting with the French under Boney in Italy."

"'Tis a cut of my saber—curse him—and I'll give him a deeper one yet. No, sir! I'll hang him to the masthead. But why do you hate O'Gorman so much? What did he do to you, old man?"

The little rogue held down his head, and gave a pitiful sigh, as he answered:

"He stole me twin girl, and sent her to an early grave. May the ould boy pursue him."

"Ha ha! That's how the land lies with you—is it? Gorman has been at his old tricks."

At that moment one of the officers approached the captain, and said something that Mike did not hear.

"Is that the case, Forbes? Old man, who is that young woman in the boat with you?"

"That's my Maura, sir. She's the twin sister to poor Katie, the one that's gone."

"And is she in love with Gorman also?"

"In love with the villain, sir! She'd poison him, so she would, and dance at his wake after. Sure 'twas she put me up to betraying him."

"I see, I see. This is interesting. Have that girl sent up here, Mr. Forbes. Of course, your daughter must have been a very pretty girl, old man?"

"The finest in the country round, sir."

"Does her twin sister resemble her?"

"She's her dead image, sir."

At that moment Maura sprang lightly on the deck and tripped over to her father's side.

Several lanterns were then throwing their light on the scene, and the charming young creature presented a sweet picture as she clung to Mike's arm and gazed shyly around, while she said, in soft tones:

"Father, agra, sure they believe you?"

"To be sure, Maura. The fine captain here knows the born villain we are after."

"'Gad, but she is a neat piece, and no mistake," thought Captain Parrott, "and I don't wonder at Gorman's taking to the other if she was like her."

Then, addressing Maura, he said:

"Certainly I believe your father, my pretty girl, and I will act accordingly."

Turning to Mr. Forbes, the second in command, the captain gave orders for the immediate landing of over fifty of his best fighting men.

Then Maura and her father were invited into the cabin and refreshments were placed before them.

The young girl was very shy with the captain, who was most attentive to her.

When the land expedition was ready Captain Parrott addressed little Mike, saying:

"I have no doubt as to your fidelity, yet it is my duty to take all precautions in dealing with people of a rebel nation. You will go on shore and guide my men, and your fair daughter will remain here with me as a sort of a hostage until your return."

"My girl remain here, sir?"

"Why not? You may be certain I will treat her well."

"Let it be as the gentleman says, father," said Maura. "I'm sure I am well pleased to remain here until you come back. Bring me tidings of the death or capture of the villain, and I will kiss you a hundred thousand times over and over."

And Maura flung her arms around the little rogue's neck, as she whispered in Irish:

"Kiss me a couple of times now, but don't go too far, or I'll let O'Gorman do the same."

Mike did go a little too far in the kissing line, as he whispered back:

"If that dandy offers to insult you while I'm gone I'll hang him up to the yard-arm."

"Never fear—never fear. Bad cess to you, if I don't pay you for this before long."

The farewells were taken, and Mike went away in the yawl, with a dozen of the sailors.

Captain Parrott returned to the cabin to quaff his wine and to make love to the Irish girl.

In less than ten minutes after the departure of the expedition, the gallant captain was sleeping soundly in his cabin, and Maura was watching him, with a roguish smile on her face, as she muttered:

"The men are great fools after all. Whisky and pretty girls have ever been their ruin."

CHAPTER III.

THE WORKING OF MAURA'S PLOT.

"THIS way, brave sailors."

It was little Mike who uttered the words, and he was leading lieutenant Forbes and the party of sailors up the cliff leading to the bluff.

On that bluff stood a tall man in the uniform of an English officer, and by his side was a single soldier of the humble class.

When the sailors reached the bluff, the officer advanced to meet them, crying:

"Welcome, thrice welcome, indeed, gentlemen. Whom have I the honor of addressing?"

"Lieutenant Forbes, of his majesty's cutter, the Resolute, commanded by Captain Parrott. You are Captain Gray, of the —th Dragoons, I presume, sir?"

"Unfortunately, I am. Gad, I was never in such a pickle in my life. Look at all those drunken wretches down there, will you? Irish whisky did it."

"What is to be done, Captain Gray?"

"Hang me if I can suggest. I fear to leave the drunken rascals alone there, as we have seen several suspicious-looking customers prowling around to-night."

"What of this famous rebel?"

"That is the trouble. This trusty old fellow here will lead us to his hiding-place, where we could gobble up a lot of the rascally smugglers as well; but I fear the rebels around here will pounce on those drunken fools and murder them in their sleep. Would that we had them on board your vessel."

"I see that your horses are safely secured. Could we not place your drunken fellows on them, take them down to our boats, and put them on the vessel until sober?"

"By George, just the thing."

"I will hold a force here to see that the rebels and the smugglers do not escape from the cave until the others return to the attack with us."

"Admirable, Mr. Forbes. I will be under everlasting obligations to you for the wise suggestions."

After passing a few more compliments, the two officers settled on the work in hand.

The drunken soldiers were placed on their horses and borne down to the boats, into which they were flung without much ceremony, and with their arms as well.

While the moment was going on, Captain Gray drew little Mike aside, and asked:

"How is it on board?"

"Just as Norah planned. Oh, isn't she the very darling of all the darlings?"

"She is, indeed. And so it is Captain Parrott who is in command of the schooner?"

"It is. You know him, then?"

"Too well. And he knows me."

"He does that; and he doesn't give you the best of characters either. He says 'twas he gave you that nice beauty spot on your right cheek, sir."

"He didn't show you where I cut a slice of his flesh away, I'll warrant."

"He didn't. Then you are old enemies?"

"Mortal enemies. I am sorry you left dear Maura with the infernal puppy."

"Maura is able to mind herself, never fear. I'll wager Captain Parrott is dead asleep now."

"And what a nice awakening he'll have! Glory be to us, but we will have the fun!"

"We will that, captain!"

"We must be very careful, as the great tug of war has yet to come, Mike."

"Never fear but we'll prosper. How many of the coast boys got here to the muster?"

"Over fifty in all."

"That's lashings for the work. It will take over twenty of the

sailors to row us over to the schooner, and you can manage the chaps left here."

"We can. But what excuse will you have to go back with the boats now?"

"Leave that to me. When you hear the first gun on board, look to your work. Now, here comes the first mate, and I'll talk to him."

They were standing on the beach, and all the boats were ready to put off.

Little Mike was getting into one of them, when Lieutenant Forbes hailed him, saying:

"Where are you going, old fellow?"

"Out to bring back me daughter, of course, sir."

"But I need you here."

"What to do, sir?"

"To show us the cave, of course."

"Sure, me mate there will do that, and Captain Gray there knows it in the bargain."

"That is true, Mr. Forbes," whispered the pretended Captain Gray. "Let the old rogue go for his daughter, and we can deal with them afterward."

"As you say, Captain Gray."

"Besides, we will not attack the smugglers until the return of the boats."

Little Mike was permitted to embark in the boat, and he kept the sailors in roars of laughter on the way, while making fun of the drunken soldiers.

"'Twould be fine fun, boys," he cried, "to give the drunken dogs a fine sousing when we lay them out on the deck. Wouldn't it?"

"You must suggest it to the captain, Pat," said one of the sailors.

"Me name isn't Pat, but Mike Shine. What in the blazes do all ye English be calling us Irishmen Pats for, I'd like to know?"

"Because it comes pat to us, I suppose?"

The sailors roared at the pun, and Mike rubbed his head, as he cried:

"Begor, but that isn't so bad at all, coming from the likes of ye, English."

"I'm half Irish, old man. If you give me your daughter for a wife I'll be all green to-morrow."

"Bedad, but ye're green enough as it is, me young buck, to think that my Maura would ever take a fancy to such a monkey face as yours."

Another roar of laughter greeted Mike's retort, and the young sailor joined in it, and then cried:

"As sure as I live I'll have your daughter, old joker, if you give me a chance."

"Begor, but I'll give you every chance in the world. When we pull back to shore I'll take care to give you a seat beside her."

When the boats reached the vessel, the officer in charge requested to see the captain.

Then it was soon whispered around that the jolly commander was lying drunk in his cabin.

"I thought Maura would fix him," muttered little Mike. "Isn't she the darling?"

The drunken soldiers were hoisted on board and stretched out on the deck, and little Mike ascended with them to seek his daughter.

Maura was peeping out of the cabin window.

When Mike asked for his daughter he was told that she was in the cabin, and that she could not go on shore without the captain's permission.

"But can't I spake to the captain?" he asked.

"He's asleep now, and he can't be disturbed."

"But sure I can see me daughter?"

"The captain's orders are that no one must enter the cabin until he summons them."

"I'm all safe, father," cried Maura, through the window, "but I'm awful lonesome without you."

"Then, begor, I'll stay out here near you, me own darling, till the captain awakes."

As the officer in charge of the boats had received no orders to the contrary, little Mike was permitted to remain on board the schooner.

He was soon making merry with the sailors, several of whom were Irish fishermen and friends, who had been forced into the English service.

Not a single Irish sailor had been selected for the shore expedition

as the English officers were afraid to trust them in fighting against their countrymen, as well as fearing desertion on their part.

All hands on board had been ordered on deck to receive the drunken soldiers.

When the boats put off again, a little over sixty men remained on the large schooner, and about a dozen of those were impressed Irishmen.

At Mike's suggestion, and after he had passed the word to his Irish friends on board, it was agreed to give the drunken sailors a good sousing.

The officers did not object to the fun.

All the buckets on board were seized and put in use, and when they were filled Mike cried aloud, in the merriest tones imaginable:

"Hold awhile, boys, till we have a service at the christening of the drunken blackguards."

"Will you make the speech, old chap?" cried one of the Irish sailors.

"Begorra, but I will that, and will give them a cheer that may rouse them a little before they get a dose of a ducking they want."

Standing at the head of the prostrate piles, Mike commenced, in uproarious tones:

"Ye villains of the world, ye are a disgrace to yer king an' country, and to the good Irish whisky that was thrown away on the likes of ye. But a baptizing in pure Irish sea-water may make ye proof again such sinful folly in future."

The sailors were roaring with laughter, and Mike paused and cast a stern glance around, crying:

"Behave yerselves, ye haythens, on sich a solemn occasion, or I'll stop the sarvice."

"Go on, go on, Mike," rang out on all sides, "and we'll all behave ourselves."

"As I was saying, ye drunken blackguards, a small taste of pure Irish water may make ye relish good Irish whisky like dacent men, but if there's one Paddy among ye, he won't want it."

Mike paused again, and cast his eyes toward the boats, ere he continued.

"If there's an Irishman among ye, may the curse of King O'Toole fall on ye if ye don't answer to my call, and ye all know he died of the drought. Therefore, I say unto ye, if ye are all haythen Saxons, lay still and be christened right. But if ye are Irish, arise and show your hands!"

Up sprung the drunken men as if touched by an enchanter's wand, and they all seized the guns beside them, as they yelled forth:

"We are Irish all! Down, down with the English hounds who would enslave us!"

"At them, boys!" yelled Mike.

And the daring little fellow struck down the officer near him with his fist.

Then, drawing a cutlass and a pistol, he led his band to the fray, shouting:

"Hurrah for our Irish christening! Surrender, ye dogs, or you're all dead to a man!"

A more complete surprise was never effected.

Before the startled English could even comprehend the sharp ruse every man of them was either knocked down or secured, the Irish sailors joining in the attack with tremendous spirit.

In less than five minutes after the attack was commenced every English sailor on board was secured, and without the loss of a single drop of blood on either side, according to Mike's orders.

At the commencement of the bloodless fray two of the Irish sailors on board fired off a cannon, which was the signal for action to those on shore.

Little Mike was the first to find his brave father, who was confined below with five other smugglers, all of whom were captured on the previous night.

Before the fray was over Maura rushed out of the cabin and flourished Captain Parrott's sword as she dashed around the deck, crying:

"Down with the English sharks, but don't take their lives. Hurra for little Mike Malloy, the pride and glory of the Irish coast!"

CHAPTER IV.

WORKING THE PLOT ON SHORE.

"WHERE is this cave you speak of, Captain Gray?"

"The opening is about half a mile above here, on the rocks near the strand."

"The smugglers cannot be on the alert, or they would be out watching us now."

"Some of them may be out, but I think not. When that old fisherman was there last, they were engaged in a deep carouse, and most of them were very drunk."

"So much the better for us. It seems to be that this place will be famous for alluring men to drink, judging from our present experiences, Captain Gray."

"Very true. What say you if we steal up, under the guidance of this old fellow here, and see what is going on in the cave? He can pilot us."

"I have no objection. If we find that they are at a drunken carouse, we can attack them with the force we have here now. Let us move on."

Lieutenant Forbes gave the order to march. Under the guidance of the old smuggler, who was one of the keenest old water-dogs in the band, the sailors marched silently along the strand.

O'Gorman and Forbes followed close after the old smuggler as they ascended the rocks.

It was quite dark, and the old rogue led them a long, queer chase through the winding paths among the rocks, until they drew up near one of the secret entrances to the large cave.

"I will now steal forward on the scent," said the pretended Captain Gray, "and I will take this old fellow with me. They are very silent within."

"Then they must be all drunk, or they have deserted the place," remarked Forbes.

"I think they are drunk, but we will soon see. Come with me, old fellow."

Captain O'Gorman and the old smuggler advanced to the mouth of the cave, which was concealed by a movable flat rock, very artfully constructed.

The old smuggler pushed aside the rock without being observed by the sailors, saying:

"Begor, captain, but they'll fall into the trap, as sure as I'm a living sinner."

"Certainly, they will; go in and see if all is well."

The old smuggler then went in, and Captain O'Gorman stood at the entrance.

In a few minutes the old fellow returned, and there was a grim smile on his face as he said:

"They're all ready for them. The soldiers are as drunk as ever, brave captain."

"That's glorious. Now to lead the sailors into the nicest trap that ever was fixed."

Captain O'Gorman stole back to Forbes, saying:

"All is well. The knaves are all blind drunk. We can seize them without striking a blow."

"That is grand. Lead on."

O'Gorman did lead on and into the cave.

As the sailors filed in, a very ludicrous spectacle was presented in the large cave.

Over fifty men, all dressed as smugglers or fishermen, were stretched around on benches and under the tables, and they were all snoring away for dear life.

"There's the rebel, O'Gorman," said the pretended English captain, as he pointed to a person in gentlemanly attire, whose head was resting on a table.

"He's as drunk as the others," said Forbes. "I never saw such a lot of beasts in all my life."

"Nor I. It is enough to sicken one of rum."

Forbes gave a few orders, and the sailors proceeded to bind the arms of the sleeping men with strong cords, plenty of which were found in the cave.

"What a lark we'll have with them when they wake on board the Resolute," said Forbes. "But how will we get them down those infernal paths to the shore?"

"Sure, sir," said the old smuggler, "there's another entrance down below here when the tide is out, and the boats can come very close to it entirely."

"That is well, old fellow. You will be well paid for this night's work."

"More power to ye, sir. Wouldn't the lads take a sup or two of this nice French wine?"

And the old smuggler filled a cup from an open cask and raised it to his lips.

But he didn't drink a sup of it.

"I fear to let them, on account of the dreadful examples witnessed to-night," said Forbes, "yet I suppose a cup or two can't hurt them."

"Not much, Mr. Forbes," cried an old boatswain. "The lads will relish a cup or so, and I'll stand a keelhauling if one of us is keeled over by it."

"Fall to, then, and take two cups each."

"Won't you drink, gentlemen," said the old smuggler, handing a cup to friend and foe.

"None for me," said Forbes.

"None for me," said O'Gorman. "I saw too much of the effects of it to-night."

The pretended old sergeant also refused to drink of the French wine, saying:

"Beer is the only tippie I ever indulge in."

Each and all of the sailors drank two cups each, and maybe it didn't soon effect them.

With yawns and groans they sank on the floor in twos and threes, while Lieutenant Forbes stared at them and stormed like a madman.

The old smuggler sank down with the others, as he groaned out in apparent agony.

"I'm dying—I'm pisened!"

"What infernal work is this?" yelled Forbes, as he glared down at the victims and then at O'Gorman, who was smiling in a strange manner.

"Hang me if I can tell, sir. But—bah!—the farce is played out. Mr. Forbes, I beg to inform you that you are now my prisoner-of-war."

"Your prisoner-of-war? Who in the mischief are you, sir? Hands off, you rascals."

The lieutenant was seized at the moment by the old smuggler and the pretended sergeant.

"I am Captain O'Gorman, of the French army, at present serving with the Irish patriots."

"Can I be awake?" yelled Forbes, glaring around him in a dazed, wild manner.

"You are awake, sir. Allow me to introduce you to Captain Gray, of the —th Dragoons."

And O'Gorman pointed to the person in gentlemanly attire sleeping at the table.

At that moment the dull sounds of the booming guns reached their ears, and O'Gorman cried:

"Brave little Mike is now at work, but I am a little ahead of him!"

"What do you mean, Captain O'Gorman?" asked Forbes, growing a little calmer.

"I mean that a friend of mine, known as Mike Malloy, is now taking possession of your vessel."

"It is impossible! Do you mean that old fellow who went back with the sailors?"

"Yes, I do. Ha, ha, ha! It is the cleverest piece of work ever accomplished, and it was all planned by a young Irish fisher girl. Mr. Forbes, do you know who those fifty drunken soldiers in the boats were?"

"I cannot conceive, sir."

"They are brave Irish smugglers and fishermen, and they are now in possession of your schooner."

Forbes gave vent to a fearful oath, and then glared down at the bound men, saying:

"And who are those fellows?"

"The dragoons, under the command of Captain Gray, who are so fond of mountain punch. Now, lads, we will deal with the English coming back in the boats. Adieu, Mr. Forbes, until we meet again."

Out from the inner cave marched about thirty hardy smugglers and fishermen, while the old guide addressed them in jolly tones, crying:

"Try a cup apiece of the other cask, boys, and drink to the health of little Captain Mike Malloy and the brave Captain O'Gorman."

"Don't forget noble Maura Shane, boys," cried O'Gorman. "Here's long life to her, and may she live to see her great-grandchildren thriving in old Ireland under the green flag."

"Long life to our own Maura."

"Health and wealth to Captain O'Gorman."

"Prosperity to Mike Malloy for a hundred years to come, the little hero."

Such were the cries that rung through the cave.

Then out sallied O'Gorman at the head of thirty active and well-armed men.

Down to the strand they all ran, while cries for help were heard coming up from the bog.

When they reached the strand a dozen of the sailors were struggling in the water, and about eight others were dragging themselves ashore.

Some of the smugglers seized and secured those on the strand in short order, while the others ran out to rescue those struggling in the waves.

"Tis a clean haul, captain dear," cried the old smuggler guide, in great joy.

"Tis a great victory, indeed. Here comes another boat from the vessel. Hear the gun and that Irish hurra? Little Mike has done his work."

"He never fails, captain. Oh, but 'tis a great night entirely for us all here."

The boats had been slyly scuttled by the apparently drunken sailors.

All the sailors were saved and secured, and great was their surprise at the turn of affairs.

Little Mike and his father were in the boat making for the strand, and great indeed was their joy to find that Captain O'Gorman had been so fortunate in carrying out his share of Maura's splendid plot.

CHAPTER V.

FIGHTING AGAINST GREAT ODDS.

"THE top of the morning to you, captain."

It was morning on the Irish coast, and Maura was hailing Captain Parrott in the cabin.

The schooner was sailing before a spanking breeze, with her bow headed for France.

The drunken and drugged debauchee rubbed his eyes and looked at the smiling girl, as he asked:

"Have I been sleeping long?"

"A few hours only. I warrant me you had very pleasant dreams, brave captain."

Captain Parrott arose from the chair, and staggered to the window to look out.

"What is the meaning of this? Why, it is daylight, and we are out at sea."

"Of course we are. Where else do you suppose we'd be at ten in the morning?"

"Ten in the morning? Gracious! then I must have been sleeping for twelve hours."

"That you have."

"But who ordered the vessel to sea?"

"Her captain, of course."

"Nonsense, girl."

"There no nonsense about it. Didn't I hear him give the order with my own ears?"

"Then I must have been raving. Did they succeed in capturing O'Gorman and the smugglers?"

"To be sure they did."

"And they are on board now?"

"Certainly they are. What are you going to do with the great villain at all, captain?"

"Whatever you say, my dear."

"Before I pass judgment, I would like to know what he ever did to you?"

"The infernal scoundrel lied about me to the lady I loved, and caused her to discard me."

"Oh, that's it, eh? I thought it was much worse than that. Was he in love with her?"

"He was—after a fashion. He is in love with every pretty girl he meets, you know."

"That's an Irish falling, and some of the English are falling into the fashion, I think."

"They can't help it, when they meet such pretty girls as you are. You are charming this morning."

"Faith, I'd like to return the compliment, if my conscience would let me."

"Then you have a conscience?"

"I'm Irish, and I can't help it. But about this villain, O'Gorman? You fought him?"

"Yes, and I would have killed him if he had not turned and run away from me."

"He says 'twas you ran."

"He's an infernal liar! Now I'll have him flogged and then hung at the masthead."

Captain Parrott, all in a rage, rushed to the cabin door, when Captain O'Gorman confronted him.

Starting back at the sight of O'Gorman, the coward turned pale, as he yelled:

"Help here! Wretch! how is it that you are at liberty in my vessel?"

"Tis by the captain's orders," answered Maura, with one of her roguish smiles.

"I never ordered it."

"Who said you did?"

"But I command this vessel."

"That's a lie," cried little Mike, entering the cabin disguised as Maura's father. "You turned the command over to Maura here last night."

Captain Parrott was astounded.

He glared at one and the other, and then yelled out in frantic tones:

"Treachery, treachery! Ho! there on deck!"

No one answered his cries.

Maura laughed merrily, and then clapped her hands, as she cried, imitating his voice:

"Treachery, treachery! Ho! there on deck!"

Over a dozen Irish sailors rushed into the cabin almost on the instant, and they all scraped and bowed before Maura, as one of them asked her:

"What is your pleasure, captain?"

"Seize that mutineer."

The sailors sprang at Captain Parrott and secured him before he could offer any resistance.

The debauchee's face was now livid with fear, and he stared at Maura, as he asked:

"In mercy, girl, what means this?"

"I'll take pity on you and tell you."

And Maura did tell him what had occurred in very short order, and in such a droll manner that all the other listeners were bursting with laughter.

"So you see," she concluded, "that your ship is mine now, and all the sailors and soldiers are my prisoners. The French flag is flying aloft, and beside it is the flag of green, as you will soon see."

"But what are you going to do with me?"

Captain O'Gorman stepped forward on the instant and answered, in stern tones:

"I have an account to settle with you, sir."

"Then of course I'll be murdered now, as you are my mortal enemy, your hound."

"You deserve to be murdered, but such is not my intention. We fought, and you know what about. You wounded me on the cheek by an accidental stroke, and then you turned and ran like the base cur you are. Dare you deny it?"

"Tis false, rebel. You ran, and—"

"That is enough now. Release him, sailors, and hand him his sword. We will fight on deck."

"You are very brave, indeed, surrounded by your cutthroat pirates. If I should slay you, I would be compelled to walk the plank an instant after."

"On my honor, you won't," cried Maura. "I pledge you my solemn word that, if you defeat Captain O'Gorman in a fair fight, you will be sent free to England."

"I will accept the challenge, girl, on one condition," said Captain Parrott.

"What is that?"

"If I slay the rebel hound, you will accompany me to England, and become—"

Before he could utter another word, little Mike darted at him and struck him in the face, yelling:

"You infernal shark, say another word that way, and I'll cut your heart out!"

The rascal staggered under the blow, and the blood spurted from his nose.

"Let us string him up, captain!" yelled one of the crew. "He deserves death."

"At my hands," cried O'Gorman. "I have the best right to be his executioner."

"I'll fight you, hound," cried Captain Parrott, grinding his teeth with rage.

"That settles it," said Maura; "and my promise will still hold good. Here's Captain Gray, and he will be your second in the duel."

The discomfited captain of dragoons entered the cabin at the moment, and Maura introduced the two Englishmen with due courtesy, saying:

"This is a little affair of honor, Captain Gray, and you will be good enough to act for Captain Parrott."

"And I'll act for Captain O'Gorman," cried little Mike, flinging off his disguise. "And, be heavens, I'll have a bout with Captain Gray, if he's agreeable."

"Who commands this ship?" cried Maura.

"You do, my darling."

"Then behave yourself, or I'll soon clap you in irons, sir. Remember hereafter that I am to be addressed only as Captain Shane. Let us up."

"What a splendid creature," muttered Captain Gray. "She cannot be a common fisher girl."

The two mortal enemies were soon confronting each other on the deck, and most of the Irish crew were to be spectators of the strange duel.

All the English sailors and soldiers were confined below decks, but they were otherwise well treated.

The excitement was intense as the swords of the combatants clashed together, but not a syllable was uttered to cheer or to discourage friend or foe.

It was soon apparent to all that Captain Parrott was fighting as one placed in a desperate position, and that he was not a match for his opponent.

O'Gorman was calm and steady, while the other cut and slashed with all the fury of hate and despair.

The combat did not last two minutes when Parrott received a broad gash on the right cheek, and then only did Mike open his lips to say:

"That's tit for tat, anyway."

"A sail on the weather bow!"

Both combatants lowered their swords, and all eyes were turned in the direction indicated.

"Stop the fight," cried Maura, "till we see what this customer is made of."

"'Tis an English frigate," cried Captain Parrott, pressing his handkerchief to the wound. "Now, you infernal pirates, you will all swing at the yardarm."

"In the meantime," said Maura, placing her hand on the wounded man's arm, "we are not all heartless brutes. Come into the cabin and I'll dress your cut."

"You are an angel," whispered the English sea captain, "and I will save you and make you my wife."

"You are very kind. How many wives have you already, Captain Parrott, I'd like to know?"

"Not one, I assure you."

"I'll think over your proposition, then, if we are captured. That's enough now."

While Maura was dressing her new lover's wound, fearful excitement prevailed on the deck.

At that time a large English squadron blockaded the French ports, and the seas around fairly swarmed with frigates and other war vessels.

The recapture of the schooner meant certain death to all the Irish on board.

It very soon became apparent to all that the stranger was an English frigate, and that she sailed almost three knots to the schooner's two.

Old Captain Malloy, who was an experienced seaman and a daring

fighter, soon took in the whole situation, and he turned to his son and O'Gorman, saying:

"She's English, and she's double our match."

"What's to be done, then, father? You are in full command here, of course."

"There's three courses open to us only."

"What are they, sir?"

"First, to fight her while a living hope of success remains open to us."

"I vote for that, sir. What next?"

"Surrender, and die on English scaffolds."

"That's not pleasant at all, sir."

"Then we can fight while there is hope, and then welcome graves in the ocean by blowing up the schooner. That's my plan, but I am old, you know."

"'Twould be my plan, too, sir," said little Mike, in sad tones, "if it wasn't for Maura."

Maura had joined the group, and she now said:

"Don't think of me at all, but let me think a little for you, friends."

"If you can only plan as well as you did on shore, we are saved," remarked O'Gorman.

"Maybe I can. Let me think awhile. What chance have we in flight, Captain Malloy?"

"None at all, my dear."

"In a fair fight, then?"

"Twenty to one against us."

"'Tis awful odds, sir. Still I think it is the best thing to try. For my part, I prefer death to being taken by the English at all, so I would."

"But they wouldn't hang you, Maura," said Mike, "since you are such good friends with the two captains."

"There are worse fates than death, Mike. I vote for a brave fight to the death."

"So do I," said O'Gorman.

"And I, then," added Mike.

"Fight to the death it is, then," said the brave old smuggler captain. "Now, to prepare for the hot work. You get below, gentlemen, and keep still."

The words were addressed to the two English captains, who had just appeared on deck.

"Are you mad enough to fight the frigate?" asked Captain Parrott, with a sneer.

"None of your business. See to them, Mike."

Mike did see to the two prisoners by placing them below with their humble followers.

Brave Maura refused to leave the deck.

Every Irishman on board the schooner felt that death awaited them if captured; and they all made up their minds to fight to the very bitter end.

About two hours after the decision to fight was arrived at, the English frigate opened fire on the schooner with her long guns, but without much effect, as the waves were running very high.

The brave men on the schooner soon replied with a vengeance, as the mainmast of the frigate was carried away at the first volley.

"Hurra!" yelled little Mike. "There's every hope for us if we keep on that way."

"We'll conquer or die," cried Maura. "Blaze away at them again, Captain Malloy."

The old smuggler was pointing one of the guns, and his son tended another.

Another broadside from the frigate, and two of the Irish sailors fell dead on the deck.

"Shoot away another mast," yelled Mike, "and we'll be able to give the villains leg bail."

Then out belched the leaden messengers.

A wild cheer burst from the Irish crew as the smoke cleared away a little.

The second mast of the frigate was hanging over her side, and her people appeared to be in the wildest disorder.

"If I had fifty more men," cried old Captain Malloy, "I'd board them now and take her."

"Why not try it, father?"

"Nonsense, boy. They have two or three hundred men on board her, for certain. Bear away for Brest, and thank Heaven that we got off so well."

CHAPTER VI.

THE ADVENTURES OF TWO OUTCASTS.

SOME four years had rolled by since the night of the capture of the English schooner.

At the dusk of the evening a forlorn-looking individual of small stature was resting himself at the side of a ditch on a hill, and he was looking earnestly down on a flourishing garrison town in the valley below.

That town was about five miles distant from the spot where the dragoons had been captured.

The little man's clothes would not bring him enough to pay for a good meal; his face was covered with a stumpy beard, and his hair was very much in need of the attention of a barber.

Hunger and misery told in his every feature.

"I wonder in what house she lives," he muttered aloud, "and if she'd know me now."

"Mike Malloy's voice, as sure as I'm a hunted man," cried another hard-looking case, as he sprang over the ditch and stood before the little fellow.

"Colonel O'Gorman, or I'm a pirate," cried Mike, as he grasped the outstretched hand.

"Why, Captain Mike, you look as if you had just escaped from the gallows."

"That's the truth. By gracious, you look as if you were going to the gallows, colonel."

"That's what I fear. I've had a devilish close call of it, old friend. What's the news with you?"

"The worst that could be, barring that I have my health and strength. I have just escaped from the prison in Waterford, where I was under sentence of death for that old affair, you know."

"And I have just escaped from a squad of soldiers, as I was out with poor Emmet, you know."

"Then we are brothers in misfortune as we were once in good luck, O'Gorman. Where are you going?"

"I was thinking of trying to find a shelter in the town below there."

"Do you know that Maura O'Brien lives there?"

"To be sure I do."

"Have you seen her often since the day she found her real parents in Paris?"

"Only twice since. And, oh, Malloy, isn't she grown to be a glorious woman!"

"I can't say, as I have never seen her since that day. Come, tell me one thing, O'Gorman?"

"What is it, old friend?"

"Are you well off in the world?"

"I have one shilling between me and starvation. How is it with you, Mike?"

"I haven't a penny. Are we not a nice pair—two beggarly outcasts—to come here looking after one of the finest ladies in the land?"

"I'll be hanged if we are not, old fellow, but I suppose we can't help it. For my part, I must love her until I die, and thereafter maybe."

"And so must I."

"Over the ditch here with you, as the redcoats are riding down this way."

The two men sprang over under the shelter.

A strong party of horse soldiers soon galloped along toward the town with an officer at their head.

When they had passed the fugitives' place of concealment, Colonel O'Gorman asked:

"Did you recognize the officer, Malloy?"

"'Tis our old friend, Captain Gray."

"Yes. He has been hot after me for three days and nights—the spiteful dog."

"'Twas Captain Parrott betrayed me in the City of Waterford. He has been chasing me up and down along the coast for over a week."

"It appears to me, Malloy, as if those fellows were bent on paying us back."

"So it does; but I'll never say die."

"What say you to our venturing into the town, and I'll spend my last shilling with you."

"I won't refuse, as I'm as hungry as a hawk. But I have something to propose."

"Out with it."

"You'll try to see Maura, I suppose?"

"To be sure I will. Won't you?"

"I will; but as we can't go together, I'll toss you who tries his luck first."

"Agreed, Mike. You were always a droll divil."

Up went the coin, and Mike lost.

Rubbing his head in a rueful manner, the brave little fellow then said:

"Luck is on your side, O'Gorman. You'll win dear Maura, and I'll be hung."

"Nonsense, Mike! I believe in my heart she always cared most for you."

"Well, well! 'Tis growing dark, and let us in to town. Have you a weapon at all?"

"Only this stout stick."

"I wish I had that same even. Have you a knife?"

"Not a blade of one. Hang me, Mike, if I don't feel like turning highwayman to-night."

"And I a pirate. Let us to town, however."

The poor outcasts were weary and footsore, as well as hungry, but they kept up their spirits by talking of old times and of the girl they loved.

When they reached the outskirts of the town they entered an humble tavern, and called for as much bread and porter as the shilling would purchase.

Just one year before Colonel O'Gorman was in command of a French regiment of horse, and Captain Mike Malloy was cruising along the Irish coast in command of a fine French brigantine.

It needed little or no disguise for the outcasts to pass unknown even among their own friends, as mud, and dirt, and rags served them instead.

While they were eating, however, sharp eyes were on them.

Two English soldiers were drinking ale at a table near them, and one of the redcoats was a keen-eyed, stalwart man somewhat advanced in years.

That man was the old sergeant who had objected to the goat's milk and Irish whisky.

Just as the outcasts had finished their meals, the sergeant whispered to his comrade, and he then arose and addressed O'Gorman in civil tones, saying:

"I think we've met before, friend."

The tall outcast recognized the old soldier on the instant, but he calmly answered:

"I don't remember at all."

"Did you ever serve in the dragoons?"

"Begor, but I didn't."

"I doubt you. Take the other, Jack."

The old sergeant made a grab at O'Gorman, and the other sprang to seize Mike.

"Down with them," cried O'Gorman, as he let fly at his man with great force.

"Down with them it is," cried Mike, following suit.

"Secure the pistol and saber," cried O'Gorman, "and then give leg bail for it."

"No sooner said than done."

And Mike seized the weapon from his prostrate foe, giving him a kick at the same time.

The two soldiers were yelling like mad.

Flinging the shilling on the counter, O'Gorman dashed out of the house, with Mike at his heels.

"This way," said the little fellow, "as I know every turn in the town."

"'Tis lucky you do, as the hounds will soon be in full cry after us, old fellow."

Mike darted into a narrow lane, and then along it until they reached a small bridge.

"Come down here," said the little fellow, "as it is an old hiding-place of mine."

"Springing over the side of the bridge, Mike landed on the side of a river, and O'Gorman was with him.

"In under the dry archway with you," continued the guide. "'Tis many a time I hid here when I was a little boy and stealing smokes on the sly."

"Then this is your native town, Mike?"

"It is; but few would know me here now. There go the English hounds after us."

They were under the dark archway, when the sound of hurrying footsteps was heard above them, while loud alarm cries rang out on all sides.

"I'm afraid I won't be able to visit Maura to-night, Mike," remarked O'Gorman.

"Then I'll take your chance, and you can remain in hiding here, old friend."

"That won't do. A bargain is a bargain. Where does this archway lead up to?"

"It runs about a quarter of a mile under the road above, and it comes out at a brewery."

"Is it free all the way?"

"It used to be. In dry weather like this there's very little water to bother us."

"Suppose we push up, then?"

"Come ahead, and I'll lead the way, as I know every step in the dark. Hush!"

They had not proceeded many yards in the dark archway, when a voice at the opening cried:

"You are right, Jack, I hear them. Cry out to guard the other entrance, and we'll bag the rogues this time. They are in a nice trap now."

"'Tis the old sergeant," whispered Mike.

"Without a doubt. Let us out at them."

"No, no! Come on quietly with me. They haven't us bagged so easily, I'll wager."

Taking his rival by the hand, Mike led him along the dark passage in silence.

When they had proceeded some distance, O'Gorman whispered to Mike:

"You know another way out?"

"Of course I do. And here it is."

Mike stopped before a sort of a grating that he had felt as he had moved along, and putting his hand inside, he pressed a small knob.

The grating gave way, and an opening could be felt by each of the men.

"Stoop very low and follow me," said Mike, as he entered the opening. "Joy be with old times, when I used to steal out here to meet the lads of the town for a frolic. Poor father!"

"Then your father is dead, Mike?"

"He is. He fell by my side on the deck of our vessel, but I had my revenge that day. Now, here we are in the garden, at the back of the old house above. I wonder who lives here now?"

"'Tis a fine old mansion up there, and it is all lit up now. There's something going on."

"We'll steal up and see."

They were stealing along the garden, when a merry peal of laughter was heard.

It came from a small summer-house not far from the large mansion.

Both men stopped on the instant, and O'Gorman whispered to his rival:

"As sure as we are beggars, that is Maura."

"I know it. There's some one with her in there. Let us draw back, as we shouldn't listen."

"And so you only laugh at me, Maura?" cried an angry voice inside the little house.

"'Tis Captain Parrott," whispered O'Gorman, as he clutched Mike by the arm.

"It is. Listen!"

"Why shouldn't I laugh? I'd laugh if I were dying, brave captain."

"But you dare not refuse my hand."

"Dare not! I'd refuse the hand of the prince if I didn't like him, man."

"And accept that of the beggar, if you did?"

"Exactly. I am just the same now as I was when I was but a poor fisher girl."

"Beware, young lady!"

"Why should I?"

"Do you not know that I could hang you to-morrow, if I please, for that night's work?"

"Do you not know, cowardly cur, that Captain O'Gorman would

have killed you if it were not that I begged for your life. Oh, you are a hound."

"Curse you, girl, I will denounce you at once."

"No, you will not!"

It was O'Gorman who uttered the last words, as he confronted Parrott at the door of the little house.

The pampered scoundrel did not recognize the face before him, but he knew the voice.

"Help, soldiers, guards," he yelled, as he drew his sword and made a cut at his rival.

Maura uttered an exclamation of joy as she also recognized the familiar voice.

Then there was a clashing of swords, alarm cries resounded from the house, and heavy footsteps were heard hurrying along the paths.

"At last, at last my poor sister is avenged," said O'Gorman, as he plunged the saber into Captain Parrott's breast.

The scoundrel fell dead without uttering a groan.

"This way with me," said Maura, as she seized O'Gorman's arm and drew him away.

Tripping behind the summer-house, the brave girl led her lover along a secluded path to the mansion, as she whispered into his ear:

"You are in great danger, but I will save you, old friend. I am so glad to see you."

"Oh, Maura, how can I tell you what I feel?"

"Silence, or you are lost."

In the excitement of the moment, and in the joy of his cordial reception, O'Gorman had forgotten all about his brave little friend.

Leading him along to a corner of the mansion, Maura guided O'Gorman in by a private door, and then up-stairs to a secret apartment.

Loud cries of alarm rang out in the garden when the dead body was discovered, and instant search was made for the supposed murderer.

Maura and O'Gorman heard the cries in the secret apartment, and the young girl said:

"You must fly from hence when the commotion is over, or death awaits you."

"The death sentence is on my head already, dear Maura, as I was out with Emmet."

"So I heard, so I heard. Poor, brave Emmet! Oh, have you seen aught of brave Mike Malloy?"

"Confound me! Why, he was in the garden with me a moment ago, and——"

"My own darling Mike Malloy with you in the garden, and the blood-hounds there now. Oh, I must away to save him at once."

"One word, Maura."

"Hurry, hurry, or he will be killed!"

"Do you care for him or me?"

"Oh, Captain O'Gorman, I always liked you very much indeed; but little Mike was my first and only real sweetheart. I wouldn't give him for all the men in Ireland or the world besides."

"And I am here to keep you to your words, Maura," cried Mike, as he burst into the room and clasped her in his arms.

"My own dear Mike, a thousand welcomes to you, and kisses in galore."

"Darling Maura, I could die happy this moment."

CHAPTER VII.

IN DANGER'S DARKEST HOUR.

"Don't blame us, Captain O'Gorman, as my heart was Mike's before I ever saw you."

"I don't blame you, Maura."

"You are a brave and a true man, and you can live down this little disappointment. Now let us arrange for your escape, dear friends."

Yes, she was the same Maura as ever.

And wasn't Mike proud of her, in her radiant beauty and grand clothes!

"You both know," she said, "how I came to be recognized in Paris by my real parents. Old Mr. Shane, the fisherman, was a poor relation, and he stole me, out of spite, when I was but a baby. He confessed it all when we returned here."

"And have you been happy here with your grand people, dear Maura?" asked Mike.

"I have, and I haven't. My parents are very kind to me, but they

want me to marry some great person or another; and I often almost longed to be back again with the people on the coast."

"They must be proud of you here, for all that," said O'Gorman, with a sigh.

"They are; and I have my own way in everything. Now let me see how we will escape."

"Then you mean to fly with us?" asked Mike.

"To be sure I do."

Maura stepped to the door and listened a moment.

"They are looking for me," she said, as she listened attentively; "and I hear Captain Gray's voice. He is after me to marry him, too, you know. The house and the grounds are filled with soldiers."

"Oh, dear Maura," said Mike, "you may be blamed for the work in the garden."

"While I live she won't," said O'Gorman, "as I will soon clear her of the charge. Do your parents know of this secret apartment, Maura?"

"They do not. I found it out by mere accident one day. 'Tis a queer old house."

"I know it well," said Mike, "as it was once belonging to my father. It was in this very room we used to hide some of our smuggled goods."

"I knew that, Mike, and that was why I made my father buy it a year ago."

"I know a secret passage from here."

As Mike spoke he moved to the side of the room and pressed a small bolt in the wall.

A small door flew open on the instant.

"Where does that lead to?" asked Maura.

"Out to the old brewery."

She reflected a moment, and then said:

"I will leave you a few moments now, to change my clothes and get some money. Then we will away together by that passage. If we only had horses, we could escape to the coast. The whole town swarms with soldiers, and they must be looking for you both, as I heard the alarm cries awhile ago."

Maura slipped out of the room, and Mike turned to O'Gorman, saying:

"You won't be angry with me, old friend?"

"Not I, Malloy. There's my hand for you. In the darkest hour of danger you will find that I am still your old friend. Heaven bless dear Maura."

The two friends shook hands warmly, but they did not utter a word until she returned.

When the brave girl did return she was dressed in the very clothes worn by her on the night of the capture of the schooner, and she held two heavy purses in her hand.

Handing one to each of her friends, she said:

"Now I am ready. Lead the way, Mike."

"But won't you be sorry to leave your parents and go out on the world with us?"

"Not a bit, and they'll forgive me hereafter, when they know the whole truth."

Mike led the way through the dark passage, and his brave companions followed him.

It took them some time to reach the opening, which led out into a small room in the old brewery.

Looking down on the road, they saw several horsemen galloping to and fro, while the whole town appeared to be in wild commotion.

"They are looking for you everywhere," said the faithful girl. "Oh, if we only had three good horses we could escape to the coast, and some of our old friends would help us out to sea."

"We have swords and pistols," said Mike, with a smile, "and why can't we win horses?"

"To be sure we can," said O'Gorman. "'Tis only to cry, 'Stand and deliver' to some of those gentry riding around outside there."

"We'll try it," said Maura. "Lead us out, Mike, as you know the place."

Mike did lead them out of the brewery, and then into a grove outside the town.

It then became evident to them that all the roads were well guarded, while mounted men were scouring the country on all sides.

Pushing up through the grove, the three friends soon reached an open meadow, at the side of which flowed a small stream with high banks.

"Let us into the stream," said Mike, "and it will lead us out to the wood above."

"Lead on," said Maura.

There was very little water in the stream, and they made good time to the wood.

Just as they were about to get out of the stream, Mike motioned the others to silence, as he whispered:

"There are some of them scouring the woods above us now. Hear the horses?"

They all heard the heavy footfalls above.

"Wait there," said Mike, "and I'll see how many of them are around."

Climbing up the bank, the little fellow stole out into some bushes and looked around.

Five dragoons were riding through the wood near him, and slashing away at the bushes and undergrowth, as if in quest of hiding enemies.

Gliding back to his friends, the little fellow was soon in deep consultation with them.

Then they all slipped out and took positions in the bushes close together.

A few moments after, four of the dragoons approached the spot, one of them saying:

"This is a regular wild goose chase, Bill, and no mistake."

"So it is, Bob. The rascals must still be hiding in the town. The mischief!"

The fellow received a blow of a saber at the moment and down he went.

His comrade fell almost at the same moment, and before he could raise a single cry.

The other two horsemen turned to hail their companions, when Mike and O'Gorman sprang at them openly with their uplifted pistols, crying:

"Surrender, or you are dead men."

Thus taken by surprise, the two dragoons were easily overcome, and unhorsed.

"Mount and away through the wood now," cried Mike, as he lifted Maura into a saddle.

Away they dashed through the wood, Mike leading the spare horse.

The defeated dragoons yelled like madmen, and ran after the fugitives, crying:

"The rebels—the robbers! This way, this way."

"Now for a dash to the coast, and a shelter in the White Maid's Cave," cried Mike, as he sent the spare horse on ahead of them.

Up through a lane they rode, and then over the hill overlooking the town.

Before they had proceeded two miles on their journey they could hear their pursuers thundering on after them.

They were then out on the open road leading direct to the coast.

"Fly on, fly on," cried O'Gorman, as he looked back at his foes!

"They are too many for us."

"We'll laugh at them if we once gain the bluff," cried Mike, in cheerful tones.

"To be sure we will, Mike, as we will then be on our own ground," cried Maura.

On and on they rode, but their pursuers were fast gaining on them. The familiar bluff was in sight, at length, but six dragoons were not two hundred yards behind them at the time.

"They are ours, they are ours!" yelled Captain Gray, who led on the pursuers. "I will have full satisfaction to-night and the girl is mine."

O'Gorman was in the rear of the fugitives, and when they neared the bluff he cried:

"Up with the pair of you, and I will keep them in check until you get down the path."

"No, no," cried Mike, "we will stick together. Away with you, Maura."

Maura dismounted and sprang up the bluff, and the others were close behind.

Captain Gray and two of the dragoons were close on them.

"Surrender, you rebel dogs!" cried the officer.

"Go to Jericho!" cried Mike. "Down with you, Maura, and we'll follow."

"Have at them—fire!" yelled Captain Gray, when he saw that Maura was sheltered.

The pistol-shots rang out on the instant, and two of the soldiers fell.

Poor O'Gorman staggered and fell on the bluff at the same moment, as he cried:

"Away with you, Mike, as I am done for. My dying love to dear Maura."

Captain Gray sprang at Mike with his sword uplifted, as he cried:

"'Tis my turn now, pirate."

"'Tis, to die!" cried the brave little fellow, as he struck the captain a fearful blow on the head with the saber.

"You are avenged, brave O'Gorman!" cried Mike, as he looked at his dead friend for a moment. "Heaven rest you, brave man."

Then down the cliff he dashed at full speed, while the soldiers paused over the dead bodies on the cliff.

On the following night a large fishing lugger put out from the bay, and Mike and Maura stood on the deck.

"Brave O'Gorman," said Mike, "I will never meet a truer man again."

"He was a noble fellow, Mike," said Maura, "and he died to save us."

* * * * *

Some twenty years after a lady and gentleman were kneeling over a grave in a cemetery near Waterford, and the former was saying:

"We must raise him a nice monument."

"We will, indeed, dear wife. Thank fortune, we can live at home here at last."

"But you won great honors abroad, Mike."

"What do I care for foreign honors. Oh, if I could only strike one good blow for my own dear land, I would die happy."

The man who spoke thus was Captain Mike Malloy, of the French army, once the pride of the smugglers on the Irish coast, and the lady beside him was Maura, his wife.

[THE END.]

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